c) an interpreter for converting electric signals from said image data input section to electronic signals representative of at least one of numbers and characters as interpretation results;

d) an interpretation result output section for outputting the interpretation results of said interpreter to an external device;

e) a front surface/back surface position detector for continuously detecting a position on said conveyor of both a front surface and a back surface of an article as said article is moved by said conveyor to provide data indicative of continuously changing positions of said article ; and

f) an image data input focus point control section for outputting data from said front surface/back surface position detector to said image data input focus point modifier, said image data input focus point modifier continuously adjusting the focus point of said front surface reading device and said back surface reading device based on said data from said front surface/back surface position detector, said continuous adjusting being made without time delay based on conveyor speed.

7. (Amended)   A method of reading an optical symbol, comprising the steps of:

a) conveying an article on a conveyor, said article including a first optical symbol on a front surface and a second optical symbol on a back surface;

b) reading said first optical symbol while conveying said article; and

c) reading said second optical symbol while conveying said article,

d) wherein the step of reading said first optical symbol comprises the steps of:

1) detecting said front surface of said article;

2) calculating a distance from an optical symbol reader to said front surface;

3) continuously adjusting the focus of said optical symbol reader based on said calculated distance to said front surface without time delay based on conveyor speed; and

4) sensing said first optical symbol with said optical symbol reader, and

e) wherein the step of reading said second optical symbol comprises the steps of:

1) detecting said back surface of said article;

2) calculating a distance from said optical symbol reader to said back surface;

3) continuously adjusting the focus of said optical symbol reader based on said calculated distance to said back surface without time delay based on conveyor speed; and

4) sensing said second optical symbol with said optical symbol reader.

11 (New)   A method of reading a symbol, comprising the steps of:

a) conveying an article on a conveyor, said article including at least one optical symbol which is positioned on at least one of a front surface and a back surface of said article;

b) reading said at least one optical symbol by:

1) detecting at least one of said front surface and said back surface of said article;

2) calculating a distance from an optical symbol reader to said at least one of said front surface and said back surface of said article;

3) continuously adjusting the focus of said optical symbol reader based on said calculated distance to said at least one of said front surface and back surface without time delay based on conveyor speed; and

4) sensing said at least one optical symbol with said optical symbol reader.

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